

XXIII. *Queen Elizabeth's Remarks on the Conduct of those who pressed her to name a Successor to the Crown in 1566. Communicated by HENRY ELLIS, Esq. F. R. S. Secretary, in a Letter to SAMUEL LYSONS, Esq. V. P.*

Read May 4th, 1815.

DEAR SIR,

British Museum,  
May 4th, 1815.

I HAVE more than once had the honour to lay before the Society of Antiquaries Transcripts of Letters and other Papers from a very curious volume in the Lansdown Collection of Manuscripts at the British Museum. There is another Paper in that volume, to which I beg to call the Society's attention: it is a fragment of a public document, with some remarks at the foot of it in the running hand of Queen Elizabeth.

As early as 1563, the partizans of the Queen of Scots in this country had raised a general cry for some settlement of the succession; and the House of Commons voted an address to Queen Elizabeth, in which, after enumerating the evils which had been experienced in former times from contending titles, they entreated her Majesty that a successor might be named, at least appointed by an act of parliament. The answer which the House received on this memorable occasion is thus noticed in its Journals. (Vol. i. p. 65.)

“ *Martis 16<sup>o</sup> Februarii.*

“ Mr. Comptroller and Mr. Secretary declared from the Queen's Highness that she doubted not but the grave Heads of this House did right well consider that she forgot not the suit of this House for the Succession, the matter being so weighty, nor could forget it; but she willed the young Heads to take example of the ancients.”

In 1566, the birth of a son to Mary Queen of Scots gave additional zeal to those of her friends in England who had formerly been

so active; and our historians have been minute in their details respecting the earnestness which marked the debates in the House of Commons on the subject in Queen Elizabeth's second parliament.

The document which I have here transcribed appears to have formed the close of an Address presented to the Queen at this time upon offering to her Majesty the subsidy, in granting which the House of Commons had ingeniously mixed it with the subject of the Succession.

It begins abruptly.

"Thyrldy we cannot but also thankefully remember to your Maiestye that it pleased the same to signifye vnto vs that youe did not myslyke of vs for our desyre in this parliament to have the Successor of the Crowne declared, for that youe rightly conceaved the same our desyre to procede from us (as in dede it dyd) of mere dutye and love towards your Highnes, your realmes, and countries, and not of any other dysposytyon or pretended purpose; and signyfyed further, of your godly dysposytyon and naturall love towards vs, to our gret comforte, that rather than your Realme shold threte ruyn for lack of declaracōn of succession which you trusted almighty God wold shewe of yo' owne bodye in due tyme after your maryage, you wold by gods helpe though it shold appere some perell to yourselfe (which god defende) declare the Succession, in svche conveyent tyme as your Highnes with thadvyse of your counsell and assent of your Realme shold thinke most mete, in suche person as in whome the right therof accordinge to law and justice ought to be settled and remayn to the joyfull comforte of vs all. And so havinge with your Majesties favour presented to the same in the forefront of our small but a most fre and wyllynge gyft theis our most humble recognytions, we do lykewyse besече your Majestie to receave the rest that foloweth as the fructs of our faythfulnes and bounden love that we beare to your Majestie, and that it may be enacted in forme folowenge."

Here follow two lines in cypher, in a small hand, with the date A. 1566; apparently the writing of Lord Burleigh.

The Queen's Remarks follow these, in a hurried hand.

“ Let thes two concernings into one mening, and my counsell is all giuen, let not other regard them selues so holy as I have no corner left for me. Let them knowe that I knewe, thogh I folowed not, that some of them wold my pure conscience better served me than ther lewde practises could auaille with me. I knowe no reason whi any my privat answers to the realme shuld serve for prologe to a subsidy vote; neither yet do i understand why suche audacitie shuld be used to make without my licence an Acte of my wordes, or my wordes like lawiers hokes wiche now a dayes go to the wiar drawers to make subtall doings more plain. Is ther no hold of my speche without an Acte compel me to confirme. Shall my princely consent be turned to strengthen my wordes that be not of them selves substantives. Say no more at this time, but if thes felowes wer wel answered and payed with lawfull coyne ther wold be fewer counterfaits amonge them.”

Such appears to have been the answer which laid the subject of the succession at rest for the remainder of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

I am, dear Sir,

Sincerely yours,

HENRY ELLIS.